

HOUMA PRESS BRIEFING

Moderator: Petty Officer 1st Class David Mosley
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Operator: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the Deep Water Horizon BP Oil Spill Briefing. All lines have been placed on mute to prevent any background noise. After the speaker's remarks, there will be a question-and-answer session. If you would like to ask a question during this time, simply press star then the number one on your telephone keypad. If you would like to withdraw your question, press the pound key. Thank you.

I will now turn the call over to Mr. Mosley. Sir, you may begin.

David Mosely: Good afternoon. Once again, my name is David Mosely, I'm a Coast Guard petty officer and public affairs specialist here in (Homa). Before I introduce our speaker, I just want to reiterate that after her prepared statement, we'll be taking one question from each caller.

I would like to introduce Coast Guard Captain Meredith Austin, she's the Coast Guard Unified Command Deputy Incident Commander in (Homa). Captain?

Meredith Austin: Good afternoon. Yesterday seven crewmen aboard working Vessel of Opportunity vessels were medivaced to West Jefferson Hospital after several of them reported experiencing nausea, dizziness, headaches and chest pains while performing offshore response operations.

One crew member was medivaced via helicopter from the offshore vessels, another as also medivaced via helicopter after arriving in Venice and the other five members were medivaced via ambulance. All seven crew members were

admitted to the hospital, five of which have already been released and two currently remain there for observation.

As a precautionary measure, all vessels working in the area of the effective crewmen have been called to port and are standing down while investigation into the cause of the symptoms continues.

Vessels of Opportunity group one, which was in the area of Breton Sound consisted of 125 commercial fishing vessels outfitted with equipment for oil recovery operations and they returned to the temporary accommodations in Breton Sound.

While controlled burns and aerial dispersants were used yesterday, no dispersants were used within 50 miles of the affected crewmen.

The safety of our team members is our number one priority and the coast guard, BP and OSHA are currently conducting an investigation which includes air sampling, checking food and water and interviewing crew members to determine what might have caused the symptoms.

It's important to keep in mind that there are other factors which may potentially cause these sorts of symptoms. These factors range from fatigue, working in hot weather, dehydration and even the smell of petroleum from the spill may affect some individuals.

We're not saying that this is to discount what happened to our people and what they're going through, and our hearts and thoughts are with them at this time. But I just wanted to point out that there are other factors that can cause those sorts of symptoms.

As a precaution, other Vessel of Opportunity vessels have received a wellness briefing and situational awareness training as to what factors they might encounter while working in this sort of environment. Other Vessel of Opportunity vessels are skimming in other areas and there's no response, but just no one in the Breton Sound area.

At this time, I'm prepared to take some questions.

Operator: Again, to ask a question, press star one.

Your first question comes from Janet McConnaughey with Associated Press.

Janet McConnaughey: OK. That – are you aware that the emergency room doctor has said that it – all of the symptoms were typical of chemical exposure and that he's – that according to the hospital spokesman, he did not think that heat was a factor?

Meredith Austin: No, I was not aware that the doctor in the emergency room said that. One thing that I failed to mention in the statement is that prior to any vessels being in the area to skim there's been quite a bit of air monitoring done to categorize what might be out there and they did check for volatile organic compounds, there were no readings that were above limits of concern and – which is why we had the vessel skimming in that area.

We would not have had vessels in the area if we didn't think that the levels were safe for people to be in. And our toxicologists have said that it's possible that just by being around the odor of petroleum, for some individuals, are sensitive to it and can give them similar symptoms without there being a chemical overexposure.

Operator: Your next question comes from Jeff Goodell with Rolling Stone.

Jeff Goodell: Hi, I'm wondering why these Vessels of Opportunity were not given proper protective equipment for the personnel? I mean after all the – the dangers here were not hardly a mystery. Was this something for – of cost savings for BP or is this a government lapse?

Meredith Austin: As I mentioned earlier, the area had air monitoring done and we were not putting any vessels in an area where any sort of respiratory protection would be needed. They were given protective equipment, they had – for the hazards that we thought – that we know that they would face.

They had Tyvek suits to protect them against oil exposures on their skin, steel-toed boots, life jackets, gloves, hard hats, safety glasses, that sort of equipment. They were not issued respiratory protection equipment because

air ratings were taken and there were no values found to be at an unsafe level, prior to us sending them in there.

Operator: Your next question comes from Karen Zeitvogel with AFP.

Karen Zeitvogel: Hi. I have spoken to some families of fishermen including a couple of those who were medivaced to the hospitals and they said that some cleaning substances were dropped onto the boats from a helicopter and that the – that this is what caused the illness. Do you have any comment on that?

Meredith Austin: We did not have any helicopters flying over there that would have dropped any sort of – any sort of material out of a helicopter. That's not something that is done. There were helicopters that were flying over the area doing area observations along the shoreline, also offshore to spot the oil, but nothing would ever be dropped out of a helicopter.

Again, any disbursement spraying that was done was done 50 miles away that would not have been anything in the area where we had these vessels working.

Operator: Next from (Julia Cart) from Los Angeles Times.

(Julia Cart): Yes, Captain Austin, under whose auspices are these workers given any kind of medical care or insurance and that sort of thing?

Meredith Austin: You know I'll have to get back to you on that one. You know again, some of those contractual issues is not something that's in my purview, so I really couldn't speak on that.

Operator: Next question from Alex Woodward with Gambit Weekly.

Alex Woodward: Hey, good afternoon. Just wondering if any of these volunteers had any sort of health evaluations before the efforts and if there were any air quality monitoring hardware onboard?

Meredith Austin: As far as any medical monitoring that was done prior to, again, that's not within my purview, I would have to get back to you on that. And air monitoring at the time, I can't speak if there was air monitoring done on that

specific vessel at that particular time. I know that air monitoring was done in the area. So I would have to get back to you on both of those questions.

Operator: Next question from (Bill Metz) with the Coast Guard.

(Bill Metz): Yes, and Austin, team Coast Guard shipmates, ladies and gentlemen, and members of the press, my name is (Bill Metz). I'm calling you this afternoon from Lincoln, Nebraska. I'm the Assistant District Staff Officer for Marine Safety for the Eighth Western Rivers Region Coast Guard Auxiliary District.

And ma'am, my question to you is the Vessels of Opportunity that are involved in response, I'm wondering if they are being checked possibly by either a qualified auxiliary or power squadron vessel examiner prior to being utilized, I guess, as a response asset. My – I would respectfully suggest that that might be an option to be considered if that's not occurring right now. And if it is, bravo zulu to you and your shipmates there.

In my opinion, and this is my opinion only, just as a Coast Guard auxiliary member and not that necessary of the Eighth Western River's District. But it's my opinion that the – that this actually to provide a VE or a vessel examination inspection would allow team Coast Guard to emphasize safety not only by verifying the vessels are mission ready, but also as another window of opportunity such as what you've already stressed in your press release to stress crew safety to your – both a master and each crew member ...

David Mosely: If I can break in – sir, we're not here to get a list of questions. We're here to answer questions. We're here to answer questions about the safety of seven individuals. Safety is our number one priority here. The Captain has reiterated this many times. If we could we'd like to move on to our next caller please.

Operator: Your next question is from (Pete Englebert) with D&L Safety.

(Pete Englebert): Afternoon, Captain. Given the dynamic nature of crude oil, it could contain benzene, (toluene), ethyl benzene, a few other products as well, and that Tyvek does not stand up to any of those, are there TSPs or CIHs aboard each of these vessels doing continuous monitoring because the dynamics or the

wave action that whatever grab bag samples are taken are not going to be indicative of the exposure?

Meredith Austin: Samples were taken of the – there's a couple things here. I know that they took samples of the source material, looking for all of the constituents that they're concerned about. They were not found at – they were not found at levels that exceeded the safety limits, the PELs, the Permissible Exposure Limits for the rest of you on the line.

There are several CIHs that are involved in the safety group. BP has not only in staff industrial hygiene folks, at Coast Guard's industrial hygiene folks and they also contracted several safety companies. So a very robust sampling plan was written up, is being executed. Many samples are being taken every day and there have not been samples that exceeded safe limits.

Like we said in this case, it was – in this case seven people that had symptoms, it was unexpected because again a lot of sampling was done and we would not put people in an area where respiratory protection was needed. So clearly there was an issue in that particular area. So we are trying to investigate what exactly happened in this case to make sure that we don't put anyone in a situation where they might get symptoms like this again in the future.

Operator: Final question is from Amy Wold with The Advocate.

Amy Wold: Yes, thank you. A simple question, who is doing the testing? Is it EPA, DQ, or private contractors?

Meredith Austin: I'll have to get back to you. I'm fairly certain that they're sending the samples out to an accredited lab and I'm not sure who that lab is so we'd have to get back to you.

Operator: Again, to ask a question, press star one.

David Mosely: Well, we'd like to thank you all for coming today and we encourage you to continue to monitor the online Web site for the response for any updates on

the condition of the individuals or ongoing operations. Thank you for your time and have a good day.

Operator: This concludes the call. You may now disconnect.

David Mosely: Hey, sir, are you still there?

Operator: Yes. One moment I'll pull you out of the call.

David Mosely: Thank you.

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